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## 2001: TAKING THE STRUGGLE FORWARD



# **The neo-liberal agenda: GEAR versus the working class**

**Underlying the government's drive to privatise is the neo-liberal GEAR programme.** This is a macro-economic policy adopted by the government in mid-1996. GEAR argues that the capitalist class is the engine of reconstruction and development in South Africa. As such, GEAR sets out a list of government policies that are designed to put a smile on the face of big business. **The key GEAR policies include**

- ◆ A huge cutback in government spending. GEAR argues that government spends too much money and must therefore retrench public sector workers, as well as "strictly contain" and "reprioritise" spending on education, health and other social services.
- ◆ Privatisation and commercialisation of state-owned companies, such as ESKOM. These companies must be run like profit-making companies and be sold to private companies where possible
- ◆ Deregulating trade and investments: instead of companies being closely regulated through laws, customs duties, and so on, these companies should be able to move their money easily, and import and export goods easily.
- ◆ Labour market flexibility, which means that bosses will be able to hire and fire workers more easily, as well as vary wages, working hours and jobs

Government's idea is that these policies create "an attractive investor climate," leading to large-scale investment by local and international companies, which will create jobs, growth and tax money for social services.

#### **GEAR has proved to be a disaster for the broad working class:**

- ◆ Over half-a-million jobs have been lost since 1994, and investment has declined in a number of sectors
- ◆ Sectors such as textiles and automobiles are under fierce attack from cheap imports, leading to job losses and large-scale anti-worker industrial restructuring
- ◆ Spending on social services has been drastically cut, which mainly affects workers and the poor: service workers like teachers and nurses are retrenched, pensions are being cut, housing programmes are being frozen and hospitals run-down and closed.
- ◆ Important worker rights in the Labour Relations Act and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act are under siege from proposed new labour law amendments that cut overtime pay and job security.
- ◆ Money for local governments and universities has been slashed, leading to the implementation of programmes like iGoli 2002 and Wits 2001.
- ◆ Government companies and utilities like electricity and water are being run on a profit-making, 100% cost recovery basis, and are now being sold-off, leading to massive job losses, price rises and cut-offs.

**GEAR offers the working class nothing. GEAR lies behind the privatisation crisis. And behind GEAR stand the rich, the owners of the big companies, the real rulers of our country.**

## **Phansi GEAR Phansi!**

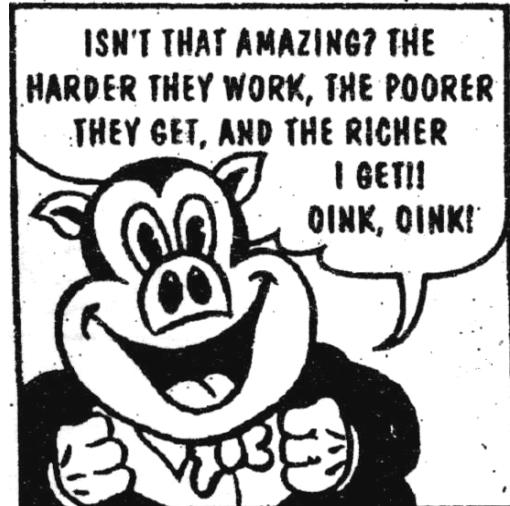
Mumso oke fokotse tshebediso ya tjhelete. **Gear e re mmuso o sebedisa tjhelete e ngata mme e tshwanela ho fokotsa batho ba sebeletsang mmuso, hore o tle o kgone ho lefella dithoto bophelo bo botle le ditshebelesto tsa setjhaba.**

- ◆ Dithoto tsa mmuso tse kang dikampani ya ESKOM di tshwanela ke rekisetsa bo rakgwebo. Dikamampani tsena di tshwanetse ho tsamiswa ka tsela ya ho etsa phaeelo e ngata, mme di rekesitswe dikampani tsa poraefete ha ho kgoneha.
- ◆ Molao wa thekiso le tshebedisong ya tjhelete: hore e tse phaeelo.
- ◆ Hona le hore dikampani di kwalwe ka mokgwa wa molao, kapa ka tsela ya ho twaileileng ya kgwebo hotswa ho bareki le tse ding. Dikampani tsena di kgana ho rekisa ka ntle ho naha hore di etse phaeelo e ngata.
- ◆ Pebofatsa ya tshebesono le basebetsi, ho bolela hore bahiri ba tla kgona ho hira batho, le ho tebela ha bobewe, hape ba kgona ho lefa basebetsi ka ho fapana le ho basebetsi ba sebetsi dihora tse ngata.
- ◆ MMumso o ile wa hohelwa ke molao ona hore otla thusa setjhaba ka poloko ya tjhelete le ka ntle ditjhabeng.

#### **GEAR e bonahetse hore melao ena ya bona ha eno sebetsa ho hang ha holo ho basebetsi ka kakaretso.**

- ◆ Ho se ha lahlehi mesebetsi e fetang halofo ya milione haesale ho ka selemo sa 1994, le dipolokelo tsa ditjhelete di theohile haholo.
- ◆ Dikampani tse kang tsa Textile le Automobiles di tobane le tlhodisano e tliswang ke ditswa ntle tse theko e tlase, ntho e tlisang tahlehelwa ya masebetsi ka hare ho naha.
- ◆ Ditshebediso tsa ditjhelete di fokoditswe haholo dithsebeletsong tsa setjhaba, mme sena se ama haholo basebetsi le bahloki. Basebetsi ba jwalo ka matitjhere le baoki ba a fokotswa, depentjhele le tsona d a fokotswa manane a matlo a emiswa, le dipetele dia kwalwa.
- ◆ Ditekanyetsa tsa mmuso o bohareng le unibesity di kgaotswe, ntho e lebisang ho qaleho ya lenane la iGoli 2002 le Wits 2001.
- ◆ Dikampani tsa mmuso le dintho tse kang motlakase le metsi tse tsamaiswa ka hore di etse phaeelo, ho bokelletsat ditshenyehelo tse100% di a rekiswa, batho ba lahlehelwa ke mesebetsi, le ditefello di a nyohola.

GEAR hae efe basebetsi letho. GEAR e ka mora tsamaiso ya thekiso ya dithoto tsa mmuso. Kamorao ha GEAR ho eme barui, beng ba dikampani tse kgolo le batsamaisi ba nnete ba naha.



# The Need for a Revolutionary Anarchist Federation

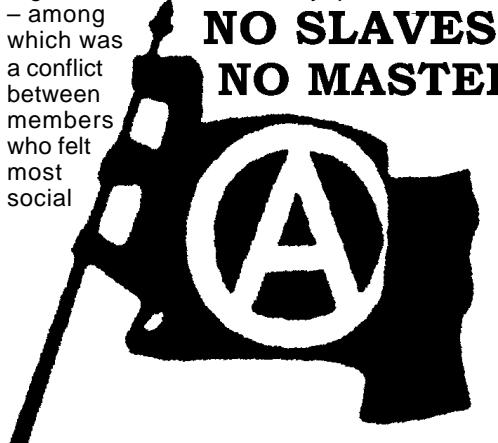
By Ernesto Aguilar

Since the 1980's, the Anarchist movement has experienced a steady increase in numbers and activism. Much of this growth has been spontaneous and inspiring. With that growth we have seen strides in virtually all strains of Anarchism, but the one that has perhaps had the greatest impact on modern Anarchism in the last thirty years – the revolutionary anarchist tendency – has grown stagnant, and its time to resurrect this vibrant wing of Anarchist organising.

In truth, revolutionary Anarchism has not entirely disappeared, but its most pronounced manifestations in the last thirty years can be traced to Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin (Black revolutionary and author of *Anarchism and the Black Revolution*), and to the now defunct Love & Rage Federation, while for all its faults, L&R represented a leap for North American Anarchist politics.

Whereas Anarchists had often participated invisibly in the revolutionary movement, L&R was an attempt to present Anarchism as a distinct pole within the broader revolutionary struggle, with its own visions and politics. Some sectors of the Anarchist movement criticised this tendency, along with various missteps and inability to answer criticism of vanguardism and poor organisational practice as "authoritarian" and sought another method of organising. The Network of Anarchist Collectives (NAC), a free association-oriented network, was formed in the mid-90's, in part, as an alternative to L&R. L&R's final undoing, however, was a host of political differences within the organisation that prompted its dissolution on May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1998. By most accounts, NAC has vanished as a functioning body as well.

L&R's break-up is said to of followed a 2 year long debate within the organisation around key questions – among which was



**Against All Authority  
ANARCHISM**

questions could be solved within an Anarchist framework and those who felt Anarchism didn't offer all the answers. Inevitably, the latter was accused of attempting to co-opt Anarchism with Marxism, while the former was pegged as moralistic and vague. What factors led not only to L&R's failure, but also to some of its organisers to abandon revolutionary Anarchism and adopt authoritarian ideologies? L&R has been dogged for years by accusations of shady politics, in part fuelled by the involvement of ex-members of the Trotsky-leaning Revolutionary Socialist League, and also through the federations willingness to exert its will even at the risk of alienating potential supporters. At its 1993 conference where L&R emerged as a federation, many accused federation advocates forcing a move from its then-network-based structure at a moment when opponents of the move hadn't expected it; one article later referred to that event as "conference of the long knives." A failure to decisively put accusations of vanguardist tendencies to rest reportedly hung over the group until its final days and are arguably at the core of its demise.

A united Anarchist group is needed, and we need to move beyond abstractions about organisation and start dealing with the realities we profess to understand. It's as if we speak out of ignorance. We don't want structure, stated goals, or to explain our ideals, yet wonder why people think Anarchists are incoherent or why we're isolated and with few allies. When people talk about organising, we conjure imagery of constitutions, regulations and authority to criticise those propositions, yet we're at a loss when movements within which we stand on the margins develop out of organising and see victories. We talk of the irrelevance of "theory" and how we are all about "direct action" but do lots of talking while others do the acting, often after reaching unity with others through "theory". We say we don't need a "program" to develop trust with comrades, but are confused when we don't find agreement with those same comrades because we arrogantly assume they think like us. We talk about revolution, but try to turn the fight against white supremacy into a piece of a laundry list for the "revolution" to deal with. We talk about freedom, when our presumptuous ideas about freedom condemn us to intellectual chains.

Some are opposed to the idea of a federation, arguing it is authoritarian. Often, such activists end up creating "alternatives" to the "authoritarians" and end up doing

nothing or simply perpetuate the frustrations and isolation Anarchists end up courting. Is organisation anti-Anarchist? In 1912 in Lawrence, Massachusetts, USA, the anarcho-syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World was at the centre of organising when weavers, angered over the reduction of their \$8.76/week wages, stopped their looms and walked out of the mill. As mill after mill went on strike, a committee of 50 was set up, representing every nationality among the workers, to make decisions. The IWW organised mass-meetings, parades and soup kitchens. They accomplished this by organising themselves. During the Spanish revolution, workers and peasants seized and collectivised factories and land, instituting their own workers committees and peasant assemblies. Spanish revolutionaries created their own institutions, formed armed workers squads to patrol the streets, and established a revolutionary force, which went on to battle the fascist Franco's squads. Men and women of these forces elected military commanders, yet rank conferred no real distinction. They historically put the idea of organisation to good practice. Why can't Anarchists grasp the need for organisation today? Some segments of the Anarchist community advocate reliance on a network structure that looks to autonomous collectives for direction. One of the network-collective model's failures is its dependence on regional collectives to reinvent the wheel, so to speak, in terms of creating principles for democratic organising and structure, when some new organisers (with no disrespect intended) have no clear concepts or assistance in this area. Furthermore, networks often operate at a disadvantage by having no means by which to carry out the decisions they make, because they lack internal structure and accountability to see the ideas carried out. More troubling is the widespread belief in a separatist organising model dictating that collectives should have no contact, work in relative isolation and only be in touch when necessary. This is better known as a strategy of "leaderless resistance," popularised by former Klansman Louis Beam, and is aimed at keeping supporters autonomous to engage in their own "lone wolf" actions that ideally protect them from the rest, repression and litigation. Obviously, this model has proven a failure in all 3 respects. Whether we like it or not, repression, jail and death are realities any revolutionary has to consider.

**Continued on Page 5**

# Your Money or Your Life

## The World Bank, IMF, and neo-imperialism

If you've ever owed money to a bank, you'll know it's not a pleasant experience. Depending on whether they think you're good for the money, the bank will either screw you in the short term or milk you dry over the long term. Banks are in the business of making money and generally they'll stop at nothing to get their way.

Right now across the world, the lives of millions of people are in the hands of two of the most powerful financial institutions ever created - the **International Monetary Fund** (IMF) and the **World Bank** (WB). These banks hold the lion's share of the debt currently owed by the "Third World". This debt first accumulated in the 70's when poorer countries borrowed in order to develop their economies. But when the world recession hit in the 80's huge numbers of countries found they couldn't repay their loan - this was when the IMF and WB first stepped in.

### TURMOIL

To understand why the so-called "debt crisis" has happened we need to look back at why the WB and IMF were set up. This relates to when the world economy collapsed for the first time 70 years ago - an event often called the Great Depression. One of the major consequences of the Great Depression was the acknowledgment by those in power that the world economic system was unstable. This instability has given rise to massive poverty and social turmoil and, for the elite, one of the most worrying consequences of this was the trend towards revolution in Europe, Asia and South America.

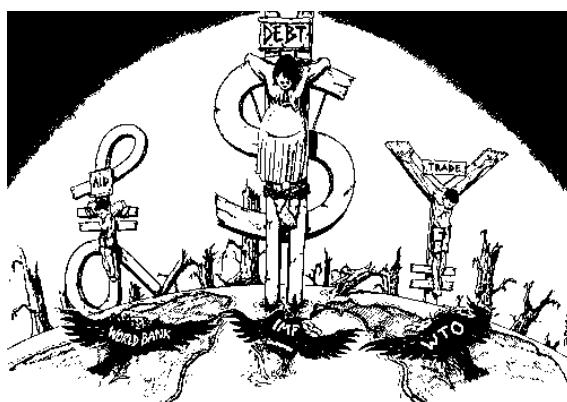
When World War II neared conclusion, Bankers and Financiers from the Western countries met at Bretton Woods to consider how best to minimise future economic instability and collapse. One of the key decisions taken was to set up the IMF and WB. These two institutions would be financed by the Western Powers and their primary role would be to "manage" the international financial markets - realising money in times of shortage, withdrawing cash in times of surplus. The WB and IMF played a major role in avoiding a world depression when they took over responsibility for the "bad debt" incurred by the "Third World" countries by the mid-1980's. Much of this debt was initially owed to private banks like Barclays, Credit Lyons, Chase Manhattan etc. In order to stave off a disaster (and the collapse of a number of major Western banks) the IMF and the WB moved in and 'loaned'

money to a wide range of countries who were about to default on these loans. This saved the big "private banks" from disaster, and gave the IMF and WB a position of overwhelming power that they have never relinquished.

### FORCE

Since the mid-1980's nearly 70 countries in the world have been "forced" to adopt "Structural Adjustment Programs" as conditions of loans and infrastructural projects designed and developed by the WB and IMF. Backed up by the massive economic power of the United States, Japan and European Union these SAP's (as they are known) were supposed to "revive" Third World economies. Instead they have led to disaster and massive poverty. Because of SAP's, local economies and wages have collapsed; basic services like sanitation, water, housing, health and education have fallen apart. Meanwhile the burden of debt has been forced onto the poorest of the poor with the result that poverty has increased, life expectancy has deteriorated and infant mortality has soared.

While it is not difficult to see why the SAP's have failed (instead of promoting investment they suck the money supply



from local economies) it is important to remember that these programs were never intended to be anything other than harsh. More to the point SAP's have played an important role in the long-term economic strategy of the West. This strategy is all about making Third World economies more dependent on (or "integrated into") Western needs and in particular more open to exploitation by Western multinationals; SAP's also guarantee the West a massive supply of cheap labour.

### DEMOCRACY...?

The power that the IMF and WB now have is enormous. They are dictating to millions of people how they should live and what they should do. For many their policies mean a life of harsh

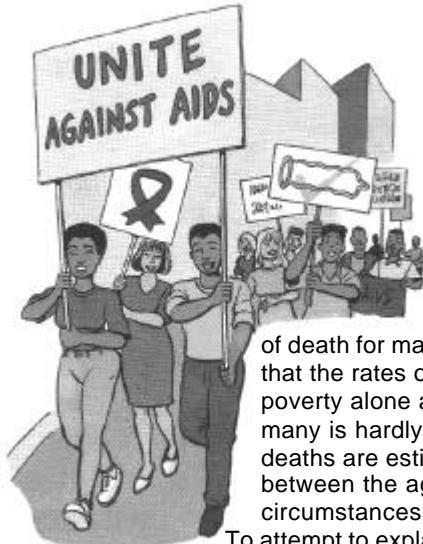
exploitation and low wages, or even an early death.

We all want a world of freedom and justice, in which we have effective and meaningful control over the conditions of our lives. A world economy in which the lives of millions are controlled by a small number of Western bankers leads in the opposite direction. In fact, despite rampant poverty and desperation in the world, there is a massive surplus of wealth. The personal fortune of Bill Gates alone would sort out the major health and educational needs of billions of people (with change left over). In other words, the problem is not the generation of wealth but how it is distributed. And the problem of wealth distribution, as we all know, is one of power and politics. Wealth is distributed according to the interests of those with the power. After all, why is the "global South" in such debt? The historic exploitation of Africa, Asia and Latin America by European imperialism is the root cause not only of the economic, political, and cultural destabilisation of most of the world's people, but the continuing legacy of the WB and IMF themselves. In the current era, these centralised financial institutions are simply puppets of the

Northern political elite and their corporate bosses, designed to maintain control on the hands of a few.

What is to be done? Anarchists want a democratic political economy. We want every "unit" of the world society (down to the smallest workplace, community and organisation) to be structured along egalitarian lines - election of managers, assemblies to organise work and work conditions; participation in active decision-making by all those affected by the decisions. This is our vision for the "long-term", but it is also our model for truly effective organising in the here and now. The use of top-down leadership will always be prone to the sorts of co-option and institutionalisation that have afflicted the world's struggles, including our own. But when we realise and create our own effective power, we build momentum for truly revolutionary change. Education and awareness is the first step in such a task. This is why we participated in the solidarity action known as S26 during the IMF meeting in Prague in the Czech Republic at the end of September 2000. S26 was an important step in bringing world attention to bear on the crime and injustices of the present 'debt crisis'. We were there to show our anger at this insane world!

Go to <http://struggle.ws> for more.



## An Anarchist Perspective on the South African AIDS Question

The position that AIDS is a disease of poverty cannot be disputed. Like with everything in life, the capitalist class, using the wealth it has expropriated has a monopoly on unlimited access to condoms, medication and better knowledge of the disease.

President Thabo Mbeki, in taking the position that HIV does not cause AIDS, has turned what could have been a progressive debate into a death sentence for many in South Africa.

Although cholera, malaria, TB and many other diseases continue to be cited as the cause of death for many millions of poor people all over Africa, AIDS has compounded these problems. Arguments that the rates of infection and deaths as a result of HIV/AIDS are overestimated, that people are dying from poverty alone are just as misinformed. Whether AIDS is as big a killer as projected or whether it is one of many is hardly the point. People are dying of AIDS related illnesses and death rates. In 1999 AIDS related deaths are estimated at around 250 000 in South Africa. The majority of these deaths are amongst people between the ages of 16 and 45, a section of the population that has the lowest death rates under normal circumstances.

To attempt to explain this away by citing other diseases of poverty like TB or cholera is irresponsible, to say the least. South Africa is presently facing a cholera epidemic in some areas and the causes, symptoms and death rates are fundamentally different. The epidemic has been identified for what it is and people dying of cholera are diagnosed and when they have access to treatment, treated for it, as are people with TB, malaria etc. These deaths are however small in comparison to the untreatable epidemic of AIDS and all you have to do is visit a hospital or rural clinic in South Africa to realise that the disease exists.

It is important, to make a distinction between the micro-organisms that destroy peoples bodies and the governments and multinationals that line their pockets with money dripping in blood. A society that worships profit, where heads of state ignore frightening statistics because state coffers are clearly better put to use buying luxury cars has to be blamed for these deaths.

The current court case between the South African Government and the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association of SA (PMA) over the right to import generic drugs, is heralded by the world as a triumph for the poor living with AIDS. However, gallant displays of empathy in front of the international media on the part of the government barely begin to address the problem. Access to health care, particularly in the rural areas is still extremely poor. Although Multinationals ownership of drug patents are nothing more than a crime against humanity, education campaigns, access to protection and access to health care are as scarce as the exorbitantly expensive drugs.

A hell of a lot more will have to be done to protect people from this disease. This will include the development of decent infrastructure, better wages and more jobs for health care workers and better living conditions for the people in the here and now, as drugs do not help if you are hungry.

This is not being done and as is typical of government, the best way to cover-up social injustice is to either pretend it doesn't exist or if that fails put on an extravaganza to create the impression of concern.

If South Africa does receive the generic drugs it is unlikely given the current distribution system that it will have much of an impact at all.

The TAC's successful tactics of not relying on Government or big business to solve our problems and instead relying on our own direct actions by importing generic aids drugs and distributing them directly shows the way forward.

## The Need for a Revolutionary Anarchist Federation Continued

This isn't a cry for martyrs, but a wake up call to those who pretend isolation is a defence and small group action is a substitute for organisation.

Clearly, a formal organisation isn't the only way for ideas to come to fruition, but developing our own internal structure is probably much more positive and successful than the "on paper only" unity some network formations represent. Federations set clear expectations of its members and establish bodies (committees, working groups) to get work done, and develop democratic structures to actually carry out our decisions. Should this entail a massive bureaucracy? Not at all, and the notion that being organised requires an immense bureaucracy is a misconception that needs to be confronted immediately. Love & Rage, for example, developed working groups to focus on various issues and struggles. All "organisation" means is that we need to agree together to some issues, be willing to share these goals and the labour involved, and decide our unity is important to our collective empowerment.

For years, achieving unity has been difficult. One method some organisations have utilised is the development of a basic 5 - 12 Point Principles of Unity, framing core beliefs, goals and/or strategies but not committing every cell to a given "platform". Setting out clear principles of unity gives local groups a basis for our collective work, but doesn't tie every cadre down to politics that don't apply to its local character, culture or experiences. A new federation could bring together groups to build an organisation around this basic political/strategic unity.

What voids can a federation fill? The possibilities are too numerous to list! A national campaign against Kom'boa's frame-up by the racist "justice" system in Chattanooga, Tennessee needs to happen now. A Love & Rage style newspaper or mass publication presenting Anarchist news and theory is a great idea. Other priorities include building principled unity between communities in struggle, revolutionary prisoners and labour; developing Anarchist organising and networking with existing groups, to be a strong voice in struggles; helping new collectives grow and helping them flourish and support regional groups; cultivating independent media, from supporting existing outlets to creating our own – from the aforementioned paper to putting Anarchist readings and ideas to cassette, CD and MP3; serving as a forum for sharing street action experiences in an age when repression is getting fiercer, and tactics for dealing with it; and the list goes on.

Our movement is at a critical time in history, a time when we've seen strides and losses, but which presents the kinds of opportunities to take Anarchism to a level it needs to go. What are we doing to see that it happens? And can we afford NOT to make those strides? *It's time to build!*

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 (The author welcomes comments, criticisms, and feed back to this article. Please feel free to contact him at P.O. Box 667233, Houston TX 772667233, USA or email him at [may19@pdq.net](mailto:may19@pdq.net).)



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# ZIMBABWE -

## LAND INVASIONS AND LESSONS FOR THE WORKING CLASS

THE so-called "debate" over the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe over the past year has generated more heat than light. The main reason why this is so is because it completely excludes the voice of the Zimbabwean working class. The argument as presented in the media is between two reactionary elite forces: old white money (big Zimbabwean landowners, South African liberal-conservatives, and British imperialist interests) and new black money (right-wing Zimbabwean peasants and ex-soldiers, South Africa's centre-right ANC elite, and President Robert Mugabe's kleptocracy). The saying goes that when the elephants fight, the grass gets trampled, but what has been trampled here in this bourgeois bickering is the truth about Zimbabwe, not the Zimbabwean working class itself. It is exactly because the working class has finally flexed its muscles after 20 years of subservience to Mugabe's ruling Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (Zanu-PF) regime that such hysteria and confusion has been generated in the media over the real issues at stake. The media have focussed on land invasions (which are tiny in comparison to the millions of hectares taken over by militant landless peasants in Brazil, for example) and the murder of white farmers (an insignificant figure of eight deaths over the past year relative to the vastly higher figures for South Africa itself - although a study has claimed that the SA incidents are largely "criminal" and not "political" in motivation).



The South African media in particular has whipped up a frenzy of speculation that the land invasions will generate a similar peasants' movement in SA where land hunger remains huge and where most of the country's black population is still squeezed into 13% of the land. These fears do have a basis in reality. Peasant anger is growing: rural labourers' networks are starting to demand radical changes and are secretly talking about possible mass occupations to back up their demands.

Meanwhile, the capitalist ANC government has little real commitment to land reform: far too little money has been earmarked to compensate white farmers for their land at market-related prices (not that we should cry over that) and, more seriously, at the current rate of restitution, the ANC has admitted it will take 90 years just to fulfil its moderate policies! The SA peasantry is unlikely to wait even 20 years, as the Zimbabweans did, to get their own back.

### THE SOURCE OF THE TENSION

So, back to the Zimbabwean working class. Zimbabwe has a largely agrarian economy, with tobacco, maize and other cash crops, plus cattle ranching, most of it subsistence, predominating. Commercial, mostly white-owned, agriculture accounts for at least 10% of GP, contributes more than 35% of total exports and employs a quarter of all formal sector workers (360,000 people). Its primary and manufacturing industries and therefore its industrialised proletariat, along with the base this represents for organised union-based struggle, are very narrow. As a result, the political reality in Zimbabwe is that to control the countryside is to control the country. This agrarian base is the reason that Zanla and Zipra guerrillas managed to fight a moderately successful liberation bush war against the former white Rhodesian state, tying their struggle closely to that of the peasantry. By comparison, in highly industrialised South Africa, armed struggle was totally marginal and merely served to turn

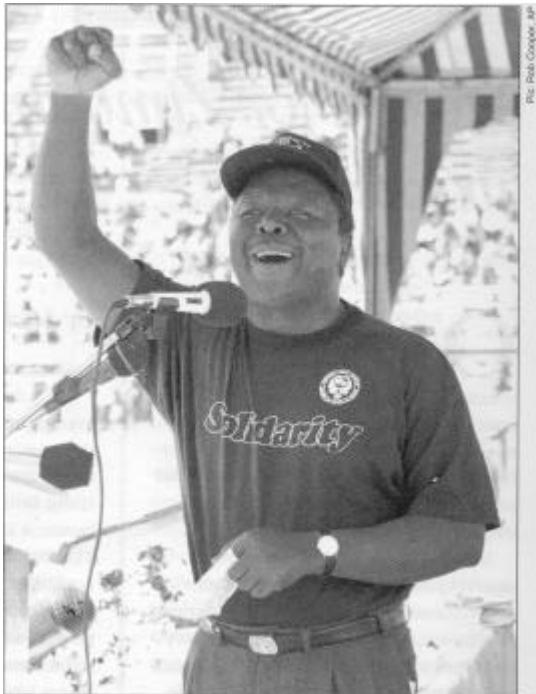
up the heat of urban, union-lead civil struggle. But despite at least reaching a draw on the ground in their Chimurenga ("people's war"), the Zimbabwean guerrillas lost it all at the Lancaster House agreement that secured a bourgeois position for Mugabe and his cronies in exchange for the continuation of mostly-British exploitation (disguised by national "independence" in 1980) and the endless postponing of genuine revolutionary demands.

The guerrillas who had fought in the bush mostly either returned to their peasant roots or, having become accustomed to soldiering, signed up with the new Zimbabwean Defence Force, often on 20-year contracts. In exchange for these plum posts and a period of relatively peaceful "transition" ("relative" because of the vicious suppression of political dissidents and Ndebele by the notorious 5th Brigade in the Matabeleland Massacres in 1983-1987 in which about 5,000 were murdered), the black soldiers agreed with their political leadership to put revolutionary demands, especially for land, on hold time and time again. But when those contracts ran out 20 years on, many remembered their old demands and started agitating for plots of land to retire on. They were also angered by Mugabe playing fast and loose with taxpayers' money such as that earmarked for the poor that went towards building another mansion for his wife. In August 1997, Mugabe tried to forestall war veterans' demands by giving them an unbudgeted US\$350-million in pensions. Mugabe also continually threatened to seize white farms over the years as an election ploy to make himself seem more radical or even "socialist", especially following the expiry of the twilight clause in the Lancaster House agreement which guaranteed some white seats in parliament, but he never seriously acted on his threats. In November 1997, Zanu-PF earmarked 1,471 white farms for compulsory acquisition by the state, but by November 1998, the number was down to 841.

Then a deepening economic crisis that lead to food riots in the capital Harare sent the government scurrying to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for aid. In exchange, the IMF ordered the government to stop its plans to seize the farms. The financial situation worsened when Zimbabwe got involved in the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1998, allegedly to protect Mugabe's own personal diamond-mining interests in the east. Zanu-PF assured the IMF that military expenditure on the war would be limited to US\$3-million a month, but they vastly underestimated the cost and after the lie was discovered, the IMF loans collapsed. Aside from its economic woes and the resulting drop in living standards for the workers, fully 25% of the country's adult population are believed to be HIV-positive, making it the world's second worst-affected country after Botswana. Against this backdrop, the initial spate of land invasions early in 2000 could well have been genuine, launched by real former retired soldiers/ex-guerrillas. But political machinations were to render the issue of whether their land claims were true or not totally irrelevant.

## THE WORKERS FALL INTO PARTY POLITICS

So where was the organised working class in all this? And why, if the land invasions initially represented the potentially radical aspirations of the (at one time revolutionary) war veterans, did poor black workers finally wind up backing reactionary white farmers against the invaders? The sad answer was that the working class was in a bit of political disarray, despite finding new confidence in itself. The crushing economic poverty foisted on the industrial workers (with some 1.5-million unemployed and over 1-million casualised) by the Zanu-PF regime's dancing to the tune of international capital plus the IMF and World Bank while pretending to be a "people's state" had finally given the Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) the muscle to start moving into the political arena. The 1997 war veterans' pay-off had lead to a tax hike and the ZCTU called nationwide stayaways in protest. Mugabe was to continue to exploit this gap between the war vets and the workers. After decades wedded to the Zanu-PF vanguardist version of politics, the ZCTU had little experience of true worker power. As a result, the unions immediately plunged into the error of creating a multi-class political party as its vehicle. So, in late 1999, the ZCTU created the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), a "united front of Zimbabweans representing various interests and constituent organisations". It is through the structure of this front-style organisation, similar to the multi-class, but far more progressive and experienced grassroots United Democratic Front (UDF) in apartheid SA, that middle-class and even bourgeois elements came to dominate the opposition.



**Morgan Tsvangirai**

Initially, there was little support for the MDC from these elements because of its working-class base. But that soon changed as this union-led alliance opened its doors to all sorts of shady church groups, opportunistic businessmen and petit-bourgeois non-governmental organisations. The MDC crucially failed to do the admittedly hard footwork of agitating and recruiting among the peasantry and among farm labourers, the real core of the Zimbabwean electorate. Instead, it allowed leaders from rural NGOs to "represent" these people in the party. As a result, the MDC quickly developed a middle-class leadership layer whose interests were at odds with its worker base. The party's reformist land policy involved setting up an SA-styled land commission to consolidate unused land, instituting a land tax on under-utilised land to support the commission, and acquiring freehold title for small farmers. When the farm invasions actually began in the months before

the June 2000 elections, the MDC had become a staunchly liberal-conservative party with a rogue leadership that was openly flirting with the class enemies of its worker base. Revolutionary workers in the country at this time warned of a repeat of Zambia's experience, where the Zambian trade union federation swept the bankrupt post-independence Kenneth Kaunda regime out of power only to have former labour leader Frederick Chiluba sell them out to multinational capitalist interests (including SA's Anglo American mining group). The MDC should arguably have backed the initial farm invasions, even if conducted by Zanu-PF agent provocateurs, as a tactical measure to divide the loyalties of the war veterans who, as ex-soldiers, still had many friends in powerful positions in the all-important military. By seizing the initiative on farm invasions, the MDC would have scared off the white farmers and other bourgeois and middle-class opportunists, but could have driven a wedge between Mugabe and the army, already disillusioned by their 300-plus dead in the DRC war and the fact that Mugabe failed to attend their funerals. By maintaining a clear revolutionary class line, organising strictly among the industrial proletariat, the unemployed and the peasantry, winning over the real war veterans and, by association, a significant section of the rank-and-file armed forces, the MDC could have become a radical grassroots organisation to shake the foundations of the Zimbabwean capitalist state. But the party, which terms itself "social democratic" was too compromised and had lost its way, so despite the MDC winning 57 out of the 150 seats in the June 2000 election (with strongholds in Harare, Bulawayo and Matabeleland), Zanu-PF carried the day for the mere cost of getting wealthy air force chief Perence Shiri, the North Korean-trained former commander of the murderous 5th Brigade and a cousin of Mugabe, to get goon squads run by a thug called "Hitler" Hunzvi to occupy 1,600 farms. Hunzvi, who was paid Z\$20-million for his "election campaign" reportedly never carried a gun in his life, so he hardly qualifies as a war vet, and the 7,000-plus invaders are believed to include 1,500 former 5th Brigade men dressed in civilian gear, as well as spooks from the Central Intelligence Organisation. The cost to the Zimbabwean economy and the workers who will be hit hardest by the continuing economic recession is clearly not of interest to Mugabe, and will not be of much interest to the new fat-cat parliamentarians of the MDC either, except as ballot-box fodder for the 2002 presidential election.

## CONCLUSION

For revolutionaries in South Africa and elsewhere to support Mugabe because of some delusion that he is in any way a "socialist", or simply because his MDC opponents are clearly pro-capitalist, ignores the class nature of the ruling Zanu-PF elite and is just as dismissive of the real issues that Zimbabwean workers are trying to grapple with as the capitalist media have been. Cross-class alliances always sell out the working class in favour of bourgeois and would-be bourgeois forces who manipulate leadership positions to their personal advantage. The only option is a class war fought (not necessarily in open combat) by the united class of workers, peasantry and poor against all usurpers and parasites, under the aegis of their own directly-democratic fighting organisations, free of any party leadership class. This is anarchy in action and it is the only thing that will save the Zimbabwean working class from another 20 years of misery. The key question - which is of crucial importance to revolutionaries in Africa and elsewhere - is, however, not so much "should the MDC have kept itself a pure workerist party?", but rather "should the ZCTU have formed a cross-class political party to contest bourgeois elections, at all?" The obvious answer, for true revolutionaries, is that the ZCTU should have rejected all bourgeois forums and cross-class alliances in favour of building the self-emancipatory capacity of the Zimbabwean productive base, the working class. As the Nicaraguan anarchist trade unionist Augusto Sandino rightly said: **"Only the workers and the peasants will go all the way to the end!"**

**UKUBANJWA  
INKUNZI  
UBHEKILE  
NOMA INDLELA  
OBASI  
ABAZIKHUPHULA  
NGAYO.**



**UNGALINDI KUZE  
KUBE ISONTO  
ELIZAYO...**  
**QALA**  
**UKUZILWELA**  
**MANJE**

## **Socialism from Below**

**You can contact the following Anarchist groups who will be able to give you more information on Anarchism:**

### **BIKISHA MEDIA COLLECTIVE**

Post: Postnet Suite 153, Private Bag X42, Braamfontein, Joburg, 2017  
E-Mail: [bikisha@mail.com](mailto:bikisha@mail.com)

### **ZABALAZA BOOKS**

Post: Postnet Suite 244, Private Bag X10, Musgrave, Durban, 4062  
E-Mail: [zabalaza@ananzi.co.za](mailto:zabalaza@ananzi.co.za)  
Website: [freespeech.org/zabalaza](http://freespeech.org/zabalaza)

## **WHERE WE STAND**

We, the working class, produce the world's wealth. We ought to enjoy the benefits.

We want to abolish the system of capitalism that places wealth and power in the hands of a few, and replace it with workers self-management and socialism. We do not mean the lie called 'socialism' practised in Russia, China, and other police states - the system in those countries was/is no more than another form of capitalism.

We stand for a new society where there will be no bosses or bureaucrats. A society that will be run in a truly democratic way by working people, through committees in the workplaces and communities. We want to abolish authoritarian relationships and replace them with control from the bottom up - not the top down.

All the industries, all the means of production and distribution will be commonly owned, and placed under the management of those working in them. Production will be co-ordinated, organised and planned by the federation of elected and recallable workplace committees, not for profit but to meet our needs. The guiding principle will be "from each according to ability, to each according to need".

We are opposed to all coercive authority, we believe that the only limit on the freedom of the individual is that their freedom does not encroach on the freedom of others.

We do not ask to be made rulers nor do we intend to seize power "on behalf of the working class". Instead, we hold that socialism can only be created by the mass of ordinary people. Anything less is bound to lead to no more than replacing one set of bosses with another.

We are opposed to the state because it is not neutral, it can not be made to serve our interests. The structures of the state are only necessary when a minority seeks to rule over the majority. We can create our own structures, which will be open and democratic, to ensure the efficient running of everyday life.

We are proud to be part of the tradition of libertarian socialism, of anarchism. The anarchist movement has taken root in the working class of many countries because it serves our interests - not the interests of the power seekers and professional politicians.

In short we fight for the immediate needs and interests of our class under the existing set up, while seeking to encourage the necessary understanding and activity to overthrow capitalism and its state, and lead to the birth of a free and equal (anarchist) society.